1:Srinivas E-5 (1940-42)1952 AW5 Coorg AW5

periods of time have ritual value while others do not. 'Ritual value' is synonymous with the term 'sacred' in its widest sense, as inclusive of good-sacredness as well as bad-sacredness, auspiciousness as well as inauspiciousness. Certain periods of time are auspicious while others are inauspicious. One occasionally finds in Coorg homes a sheet of cardboard nailed to the wall which mentions the inauspicious periods in each day of the week. Important work is not begun during an inauspicious period.

Adult Coorgs are usually able to read the *panchānga* which may be described as the ritual calendar of the Hindus. *Panchāngas* are nowadays printed and sold in towns, and it is customary for a Coorg house to have a *panchānga*. It is frequently referred to as it gives the auspicious and inauspicious periods in each day, the days on which one may have one's face shaved, the days on which one may travel in a particular direction, when an eclipse will occur, and so on.

Hindu astrology is based on the idea of *karma* and touches Hindu theological beliefs at every point; and, strange as it may seem to Westerners, astrology involves a knowledge of astronomy. Events like an eclipse, and the day and period of time when the sun passes from one zodiacal sign to another are significant for ritual purposes, and they are all mentioned in the *panchānga*.

Astrology may be regarded as a Sanskritizing agent, and the more a tribe, local group, or caste resorts to astrology the more does its beliefs become Sanskritized. Sanskritic Hinduism is Hinduism which transcends provincial barriers and is common to the whole of India.

IV

Mangala has not only to be performed on an auspicious day, but also in an auspicious place: a Coorg likes to have it performed in his ancestral house which he regards as sacred and for which he has a strong attachment. Only certain high castes like the Brahmins, Okkaligas, and Gauḍas may enter all parts of the ancestral house. Mēdas and Poleyas, on the other hand, have to stop at the paved yard in front of the house. Castes like the smiths (Airis), washermen (Maḍivāḷa), and Baṇṇas may come to all parts of the house except the kitchen, central hall, and south-western room. If, however, they have to come in to perform their duties on certain

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765 783 mourners are required to perform certain rites while their clothes are wet and dripping.

On the twelfth or sixteenth day of the death of a person the ceremony of *māda* is performed and this puts an end to ritual mourning for all except the first-grade mourners. Until the performance of *māda*, the mourners offer food every day to the spirit of the dead person. When making these offerings they are required frequently to take a plunge in a well or pond with their clothes on. But this is not a pleasant thing to do, and especially so in the wet and cold seasons, and consequently, after the first plunge for the day, the mourners content themselves by washing their hands and feet, and wetting a corner of their waist-cloths. This is regarded as sufficient to meet the ends of ritual purity. Such a traditionally sanctioned mechanism makes ritual simpler and less inconvenient to the persons concerned.

The widower (or widow) and eldest son go, after the mourning period is over, to Bhāgamaṇḍla where the rivers Kāvēri and Kanaké meet. After a shave, they bathe in the confluence of the two rivers, and then offer balls of rice-flour to the dead person's spirit. This is followed by a visit to the temple of Bhaganḍēshwara [778] where the mourners offer worship. Subsequently they go to the source of the River Kāvēri, bathe in the larger spring, worship the smaller spring, and then return home.

783 Two ideas can be distinguished in the above ritual acts: (1) a ritual bath alters the ritual status of the subject; and (2) bathing in a sacred river is not only purifying in a ritual sense, but also 184 removes the sins of the bather. This latter idea is shared by Hindus all over India, and when a Coorg bathes in the Kāvēri he participates in a ritual idiom that spreads all over India. The Kāvēri is a sacred river for Hindus in every part of south India, and it is even called the '*dakshiṇa ganga*' or the Southern Ganges. Bathing in the Ganges, or in any other sacred river, rids a person of the sins he [782] has committed both in this and in a previous existence. It confers on him spiritual merit (*puṇya*).

[779] Sanskritic Hinduism has incorporated into itself the idea that bathing changes the ritual status of the bather, and has elaborated it in such a manner that pious Hindus believe in the sin-cleansing and merit-conferring powers of sacred rivers.

846 On the seventh or twelfth day after the birth of a child in a Coorg house, the washerman comes with a vessel full of water in which

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hand, cobra-worship has a different orientation. In each village or locality, a platform is built round a peepul-tree (*ficus religiosa*) and on this platform are kept sculptured images of single snakes, or of two intertwined snakes. Such a platform is worshipped by all the people in the locality.

Cobra-worship among Coorgs has the same orientation it has in Malabar but for one important difference: in Malabar the deity Subramaṇya does not seem to be connected with cobras, whereas everywhere else in south India cobras are identified with Subramaṇya, the second son of Shiva. Shrines dedicated to Subramaṇya, some of them well-known centres of pilgrimage, are commonly found in south India.

The identification of cobras with Subramaṇya demonstrates the way in which Sanskritic Hinduism operates. The worship of cobras is very popular among all Hindus, and the identification of cobras with Subramaṇya provides a door for the entry of Sanskritic Hinduism. People who until then had only been worshipping cobras came to know about Subramaṇya, the son of Shiva. They also learn of the story of Subramaṇya's birth, which is a tiny slice of Hindu mythology; and of Shiva, his relation to other gods like Vishṇu and Brahma, and so on. Pilgrimages to shrines dedicated to Subramaṇya became popular, and these shrines again are a source for the further spread of Sanskritic Hinduism. There are usually myths about these shrines and each such myth tells the pilgrim a little more about Sanskritic Hinduism.

Stones representing Pūda and Guḷika are frequently found in the compound of a Coorg's house. Pūda is the Tamil corruption of the Sanskritic *bhūta*, which means a spirit. Pūda is frequently one of the deities in a village temple.

Guḷika in the Tamil country is the name of one of the eight serpents supporting the earth in Hindu mythology. In Malabar and Coorg, however, he is better known as the son of Saturn. He is also referred to as Māndi.

Guḷika is associated with death: a man is supposed to see Guḷika just before dying. Horoscopes drawn up in Malabar and Coorg show the position of Guḷika, and this is said to indicate when the native is going to die. When a number of deaths take place in a Coorg's house it is customary to plant a stone called Mrityu Guḷika (death Guḷika). This is believed to put an end to the deaths.

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on the occasion of the festival of the local village-deity. Such a festival ensured the presence of a large number of elders, a fact which added to the weight and authority of any decision given by the headman. Even more important was the fact that people were generally afraid to perjure themselves before a deity, and this was specially so in the case of some deities like Appangiriyappa of Kāṭakēri, well known for the severe punishment which he inflicted on perjurors.

The success with which a headman was able to settle disputes also depended on his wealth, the spread of his kinship ties, and his reputation for impartiality. The impoverishment of some headmen in recent years and the breakdown of the traditional way of life have been responsible for undermining the authority of the headmen.

XI

Formerly, two or three neighbouring *nāḍs* came together occasionally to discuss matters of common concern. A folksong contains an appeal (*éyi koḍ*) to an assembly of the elders of two *nāḍs* from an assembly of the elders of a single *nāḍ*. Another folksong refers to the elders of three *nāḍs* meeting together.

The performance of certain calendar festivals such as the harvest festival requires the co-operation of several *nāḍs*. The ritual cutting of paddy sheaves constitutes the most important rite of the festival, and this has to be performed during a particular period on a particular day. Both the date and time of performance of the rite are decided only a fortnight before the festival by the astrologer of the Pāḍi Subramaṇya temple in Pāḍi village, who informs the assembled headmen of Pāḍināḷknāḍ of his decision. This is later conveyed to every *nāḍ*, village, and *okka*.

Coorgs everywhere in Coorg, with the exception of Kaḍiyetnāḍ people who performed the rite on a different day, accepted the decision of the astrologer of the Subramaṇya temple in Pāḍi. The acceptance produced uniformity in very many *nāḍs*. Such ritual uniformity provides common values and makes possible the integration of several *nāḍs* into a single community.

But it is chiefly Sanskritic Hinduism which provides Coorgs and other Hindus in Coorg with common values which transcend the barriers between *nāḍ* and *nāḍ*, and between caste and caste.

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779 Sanskritic Hinduism also integrates Hindus in Coorg with Hindus
184 in other parts of India. Coorgs and other Hindus in every part of
171 Coorg worship Sanskritic deities like the Kāvēri. Hindus outside Coorg also go on pilgrimage to the source of the Kāvēri on the first of Libra. This makes clear to Coorgs that they are part of a wider community which worships the Kāvēri. Similarly the pilgrimages of Coorgs to certain famous centres of pilgrimage outside Coorg brings them into contact with Hindus speaking different languages and observing different customs, but who all worship certain common deities.

Sanskritic Hinduism gives, then, certain common values to all Hindus, and the possession of common values knits people together into a community. The spread of Sanskritic rites, and the increasing Sanskritization of non-Sanskritic rites, tend to weld the hundreds of sub-castes, sects, and tribes all over India into a single community. The lower castes have a tendency to take over the customs and rites of the higher castes, and this ensures the spread of Sanskritic cultural and ritual forms at the expense of others.

776 The majority of village-deities in Coorg have Sanskritic names:
171 Bhagavati (Povvedi), Chāmuṇḍi, Chauṇḍi, Kāḷi, Shasta or Ayy-
779 appa, and Kshētrapāla (corrupted into Kētrappa) are all Sanskritic. It is possible that these deities were originally non-Sanskritic and known by different names.

There is a passage in the ancient folksong, *désha kett pāt*, which may be translated as 'there is a Mādēva for every *nāḍ*, a Povvedi for every village, an Ayyappa for every *kéri* (section of a village), a Nāta (cobra-deity) for every *ōṇi* (lane leading to a Coorg house), and a Pūda for every *okka*'. The arrangement mentioned is too neat to be true, but it is not without a germ of truth. Usually, a cobra-deity is found in an *okka* while Povvedi and Mādēva are deities worshipped by a caste, or village, or *nāḍ*. The important point, however, is that every intelligent and educated Coorg interprets the above passage as meaning that the various village-deities are forms of Shiva or his wife Pārvati. This rule enables the chaos of the actual pantheon to be reduced to some kind of order. A similar rule prevails everywhere in India, and this has enabled Sanskritic Hinduism to absorb non-Sanskritic deities.

779 It is wrong, however, to imagine that it is always Sanskritic
634 Hinduism which bridges the gap between *nāḍs*. The harvest festival, for instance, is in the main non-Sanskritic even though it

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779 touches Sanskritic ritual idiom at several points. There is also the
634 classic instance of Kaliyāṭanḍa Ponnappa (alias Ajjappa), the fighter, magician, and doctor, whose apotheosized spirit is nowadays worshipped by Coorgs in every part of Coorg.

769 The story of Kaliyāṭanḍa Ponnappa is not entirely fictitious, but
173 has a basis of fact. He was a descendant of the Kaliyāṭ *okka* in Kunjala village in Nālknāḍ, and very early in his life he seems to have gone to Malabar to study medicine and magic. After his return to Kunjala he became famous for his magical powers: he was said to have under his control the 'ten spirits of the underworld' (*pattu kūṭ pātāḷa*) which did what he wanted them to do. He was also a fighter, and he actually died while fighting the soldiers of Karaṇembāhu, the chief of Bhāgamanḍlanāḍ at that time. His friend and companion Boḷtu committed suicide after Ponnappa's death.

The spirit of Ponnappa caused headache in everyone. A famous magician was sent for and he had the spirits of Ponnappa and Boḷtu and the 'ten spirits of the underworld' imprisoned in a conch-shell. The conch-shell was buried under a stone in Malabar. But some time later an accident released the spirits from the conch-shell, and subsequently the spirits of Ponnappa and Boḷtu, and their common friend Kuṭṭapāla Māyila, all found shelter in the well-known temple of Sārtāvu (Ayyappa) of Makki.

[791] Ponnappa and his companions have found shelter in several temples in south-west Coorg. There are Ponnappa's oracles everywhere in Coorg Proper, but none may practise as an oracle unless he has been authorized by the chief oracle of Ponnappa in Makki.

[782] People in every part of Coorg vow to make offerings to Ponnappa when they are suffering from bodily aches. It is believed that Sārtāvu (Ayyappa) has conferred on Ponnappa the power to cure aches. There is an annual festival in honour of Ponnappa at the Sārtāvu temple in Makki.

769 Educated Coorgs point out that Ponnappa is not a deity, but
776 only the very powerful spirit of a great magician and doctor who, in addition, died while fighting. The spirit of Ponnappa was, to begin with, guilty of anti-social conduct, giving headaches to everyone. That was the reason for its imprisonment in a conch-shell. After its release, it sought and obtained the protection of Sārtāvu of Makki. It then no more caused headaches, but cured them instead. It was subordinated to a well-known deity before being worshipped.

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VII

HINDUISM

I

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ATTEMPTS to define an enormously complex and amorphous phenomenon like Hinduism have usually ended in failure. No definition will be attempted here, but instead some important characteristics will be mentioned.

Hinduism has a long history, in the course of which it has spread over the whole of India. Buddhism, in origin a Hindu schism, is now the religion of a great part of Asia.

The structural basis of Hinduism is the caste system which occasionally even survives conversion to Christianity or Islam. The hierarchical system, with the Brahmin and Untouchable at either end, represents a fusion of Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic systems of ritual and beliefs. Each caste has both Sanskritic and non-Sanskritic ritual and beliefs, but the proportions in which the two are found together vary from caste to caste, and also from region to region. It is now possible to understand how Hinduism is able to include within itself the worship of trees, rivers, and mountains, and cults of ancestors and village-deities, as well as the profound philosophy of the Upanishads and Vēdānta, and the mysticism of the Bhakti Schools. Reformist sects like the Jains and Lingāyaṭs ended by becoming castes which resulted in walls being built round them, while, at the same time, they remained within the fold of Hinduism. The caste system has enabled a vast number of tiny groups with distinct cultures, occupations, and systems of belief to live side by side, the autonomy of each being respected while at the same time co-operation was ensured between them. But in the history of India the idea of hierarchy has occasionally been questioned, and unsuccessful attempts have been made to overthrow the caste system. More frequent, however, has been the effort of lowly placed groups to raise their status as a group by Sanskritizing their ritual and belief.

Rites and beliefs have been constantly undergoing a process of Sanskritization. This is going on both inside and outside Hinduism. The rites and beliefs of the castes occupying the lower rungs

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of the caste-ladder as well as the rites and beliefs of outlying communities hidden away in the forest-clothed mountains of India have been subjected to Sanskritization. The presence of completely Sanskritized worship of rivers, trees, and mountains in Hinduism, and their incorporation in the vast mythology of Hinduism, make easier the assimilation of the ritual and beliefs of the lower castes and of communities remaining outside Hinduism.

Hinduism is not static. Like every living religion it has continually reacted to the political and social forces of the time, both influencing them and being influenced by them. In the last hundred years it has produced reformist movements like the Brahmo Samāj, Ayra Samāj, and the Rāmakrishṇa Mission. Mahātma Gāndhi himself in his fight against Untouchability and in the many other reforms he advocated provides us with an instance of the dynamic nature of Hinduism.

While the intellectual has all along concentrated on the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gīta, and the Philosophical Systems, to the ordinary Hindu the innumerable feasts, fasts, *vratas* (rites and austerities performed to achieve certain ends), pilgrimages, and occasional visits to nearby temples constitute the stuff of religious life. The *purāṇas* (stories illustrating the works and powers of the gods), *itihāsas* (consisting of the two epics, the Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata), and stories about local saints and the songs sung by them, all have a conspicuous place in day-to-day living.

II

The concept of 'spread' has been used throughout this book: Hinduism has been split up, for purposes of analysis, into 'All-India Hinduism', 'Peninsular Hinduism', 'Regional Hinduism', and finally purely 'Local Hinduism'. All-India Hinduism is Hinduism with an All-India spread, and this is chiefly Sanskritic in character. Peninsular Hinduism spreads over the entire peninsular part of India, while Regional Hinduism has a more restricted spread. A 'Region' has to be defined in every case, and in this book Malabar, South Canara, and Coorg Proper may be said to constitute a Region. Local Hinduism is Hinduism with its spread confined to Coorg Proper, or even a smaller area within it. In a very broad sense it is true that as the area of spread decreases, the number of ritual and cultural forms shared in common

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increases. Conversely, as the area increases, the common forms decrease.

'Spread' might vary for different castes in the same village or town: Brahmins everywhere have much Sanskritic ritual in common, and this we call 'horizontal spread'. A linguistic area is a culturally homogeneous area, relatively speaking, and the Brahmins in any linguistic area share some cultural and ritual forms with all the castes, including the lowest, in that area. This type of spread, common to all the castes in an area, has been termed 'vertical spread'.

It is essential to distinguish here between the possession of common ritual and cultural forms, and of common deities and other objects of worship. The latter is more directly productive of solidarity than the former. The possession of common cultural and ritual forms is also a factor making for solidarity, but not as directly as the possession of common deities. It is possible to imagine situations in which the strength of the latter bond might result in a denial of the former. Members of two different religions living in the same area sharing the same language and other cultural and ritual forms might be involved in a mutually destructive conflict.

All-India Hinduism, as mentioned earlier, is chiefly Sanskritic and it spreads in two ways: by the extension of Sanskritic deities and ritual forms to an outlying group, as well as by the greater Sanskritization of the ritual and beliefs of groups inside Hinduism. Both these processes are at work, and the first results in Sanskritic deities assuming different forms in their travels all over India, while the second results in local deities assuming Sanskritic labels and forms. The Vēdic deity Kshētrapāla becomes Kētrappa in Coorg, while the local cobra-deity becomes identified with Subramaṇya, the warrior-son of Shiva.

All-India Hinduism possesses certain features which make easy the absorption of local elements. The worship of the river Ganges which is one of the features of Sanskritic Hinduism makes easy the absorption of river-worship in every part of India, including the worship of the River Kāvēri which rises in, and flows through, Coorg. The Kāvēri is sacred to Hindus all along its course from the source to the estuary. Temples are built along its course, and especially where other rivers join it, and on islands formed by the river. Bathing in rivers is productive of spiritual merit (*puṇya*) and

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destructive of sin (*pāpa*). Bathing in the Kāvēri on certain days such as the first of Libra and Shivarātri is specially productive of *puṇya*.

The Kāvēri is called '*dakshiṇa ganga*' or 'southern Ganges', and the Kāvēri myth (see Appendix) tells us that waters of the Ganges and other sacred rivers and seas are present in the source of the river on the first of Libra at the moment of the river's birth. The faithful believe that there is an underground passage connecting the source of the river with the Ganges at Benares. Pilgrims to the Tala Kāvēri, like pilgrims to Benares, return with the water of the sacred river in sealed copper pots. This water is used for ritual purification and drinking on certain days. Coorg pilgrims sprinkle the holy water on members of their *okka*, and on the house, granary, and cattle.

Offerings of balls of rice-flour are made to dead relatives on the banks of the Kāvēri; and the ends of the garments of the husband and wife are tied together while bathing in the river and in the larger of the two springs of Tala Kāvēri. Both these concepts are common to Hindus all over India.

The Kāvēri Myth, whose authorship appears to be Brahminical, has the Ganges Myth for its model. As is well known, the Ganges meets the Jumna at Allahabād, and to this, Hindu mythology adds a third river, the Saraswati, which is said to flow underground and join unseen the first two rivers. The confluence of the Ganges, Jumna, and the mythical Saraswati is called '*triveṇi sangama*' or 'union of three rivers'.

At Bhāgamaṇḍla, about three miles from the source of the Kāvēri, it meets the Kanaké. But to this the Kāvēri Myth adds a third river, the Sujyoti, which is said to flow underground and join the first two.

There is a myth about practically every river in India, and in every one of these myths some Sanskritic deities, and sages and characters from the epics and the *purāṇas*, take part. Each myth in time becomes a part of the vast corpus of Hindu mythology. Each myth makes sacred certain features of local geography by associating deities, and characters from the epics and *purāṇas*, with them. The myths abound in inconsistencies which, however, do not bother the bulk of the Hindus.

On certain occasions Coorg women are required to worship the domestic well, and this is referred to as '*ganga pūja*'. A similar

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of the world. Certain ritual and cultural forms are found widespread 171
over peninsular India: the *tāḷi* or marriage badge tied by the groom
to the bride is found everywhere except among Coorgs. A married [302]
woman wears a vermilion mark on her forehead, and only she is
entitled to a necklace of tiny black beads and black bangles and
to wear flowers in her hair. The cult of the village-deities too is [776]
broadly similar.[1]

Coorg Proper forms a 'Region' along with Malabar and South 101
Canara. The three areas mentioned have many similar rites, beliefs, 779
customs, and habits. But within this 'Region', Coorg Proper seems
to have more in common with Malabar than with South Canara.
The ritual forms which Coorg shares with Malabar and South
Canara, and the deities worshipped by them, usually come under
Regional Hinduism, while the ritual forms and deities shared in
common with Kannaḍigas and Tamilians usually come under
Peninsular Hinduism.

Local Hinduism has a more restricted 'spread' than Regional 779
Hinduism. The people of a village or *nāḍ* share a great many ritual 184
and cultural forms in common, though membership of a caste
frequently cuts across these alinements in the case of the top and
immigrant castes. Castes like the Baṇṇa, Paṇika, and Kaṇiya share
certain ritual and cultural forms with not only their counterparts
in Malabar but with all Malayāḷīs. Similarly with castes like the
Poleyas and Mēdas who are immigrants from the Kannaḍa country.
The length of the period of residence of an immigrant caste, and
its position in the caste system, are factors which influence the extent
to which it has preserved its traditional culture.

The River Kāvēri is a manifestation of Pārvati, the wife of Shiva, 773
and the devout refer to it as Mother Kāvēri in certain contexts. 776
Coorgs regard the Kāvēri as their patron goddess: the Kāvēri
Myth associates the river specially with Coorgs. Coorg women [291]
pleat their saris at the back instead of in the front as in the rest of
India, and this feature of their dress is attributed in the Myth to
the force of the floods which pushed the pleats of the assembled
Coorg women to the back. This happened when Pārvati first
assumed the form of a river, and Coorgs, men and women, were
waiting for their patron goddess to appear at Balmuri, a few miles
from the source.

Regional Hinduism often contains some Sanskritic elements, in 779
which case it directly stresses Regional ties and, indirectly, All-India 171

[1] [THROUGHOUT PENINSULAR INDIA -- ANALYST]

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ties. The identification of Subramaṇya with cobras in Coorg, and in the Tuḷu, Telugu, and Kannaḍa countries is a case in point. Subramaṇya or Skanda, the warrior-son of Shiva, is a Sanskritic deity having an All-India spread. Cobras are reverenced throughout India by Hindus and their worship takes different forms in different parts of the country. But the identification of cobras with Subramaṇya is confined to certain areas in peninsular India, and such an identification marks them off from other areas. At the same time such an identification draws the Regional phenomenon into the All-India complex.

A linguistic area is a culturally homogeneous area, relatively speaking. All the castes in such an area possess in common certain cultural and ritual forms. This type of 'spread' has been called 'vertical spread'.

The upper castes in every part of India have a certain amount of Sanskritic ritual in common, and this has been called 'horizontal spread'. Thus a Brahmin in Coorg will have a certain amount of Sanskritic ritual in common with a Brahmin in Kashmir.

Every caste in practically every linguistic area in India shares in both horizontal and vertical spreads. Generally speaking, the higher castes have more of the former than the lower, and the lower castes share more of the latter than the upper castes.

The systematic reconstruction of Indian history which has taken place in the last seventy years, the all-round improvement in communications, newspapers, radio, films, and books have all contributed to greater and greater Sanskritization of Hinduism. The various reformist movements in Hinduism, while conducting a propaganda for the removal of what they considered to be 'defects' in Hinduism, tended to stress the value of Sanskritic Hinduism. The greatness of Sanskrit literature and the vitality of Indian philosophical thought in Sanskrit have also contributed to the increasing importance of Sanskritic Hinduism.

III

The complete absorption of any group of people into the Hindu fold is indicated by their becoming a caste. The exact position which such a group occupies in the hierarchy might be a matter of dispute, but this is not important. Once the popular idea of caste as a rigid, five-fold hierarchy is given up and it is thought of as

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authors of the Myth saw an inconsistency between Coorg dietary, plus their failure to resort to Vēdic ritual on certain occasions of life, and their high economic position and the profession of arms. The last two factors favoured their being considered Kshatriyas, while the first two factors did not. The situation was resolved ingeniously by their being considered the descendants of an inter-caste marriage.

Educated Coorgs are, however, certain that they are Kshatriyas. In 1902, Shri K. Appayya, a Coorg doctor in the employment of the Mysore Palace, wrote a book on Coorg customs in Kannaḍa, entitled *Koḍagara Kulāchārādi Tatvōjjivini*, and in this book he tried to derive every Coorg custom from the customs of the Vēdic Kshatriyas. This tendency is a common one: educated Coorgs regard themselves as Indo-Aryans, descendants of the original Indo-Aryan immigrants into India.

IV

Sanskritic Hinduism has a vast mythology. There are the *itihāsas* which consist of the epics, Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābhārata. There are also the *purāṇas* which 'celebrate the powers and works of positive gods and represent a later and more extravagant form of Hinduism, of which they are in fact the Scriptures. The *purāṇas* are 18 in number, and in addition to these there are 18 *upa-purāṇas* or subordinate works . . . . None of them is devoted exclusively to one god, but Vishṇu and his incarnations fill the largest space.'[1]

The *purāṇas* are religious stories in which figure deities, and many semi-divine characters, and the public reading of the *purāṇas* and epics is even now popular. The *purāṇas* have played a great part in the spread of Hinduism as ordinary people became familiar with deities and ideas of Sanskritic Hinduism through them. Even more important is the fact that the *purāṇas* facilitated the absorption of local myths and legends. (The Kāvēri Myth is part of the Skānda Purāṇa.) The *purāṇas* have been continually expanding, absorbing local myths and legends, and also weaving myths round great historical figures and events. Another importance of the *purāṇas* is that they bring purely local myths into the main stream and thus charge them with All-India significance. Thus, through the *purāṇas*, a local community becomes acquainted with

[1] J. Dowson, *Hindu Classical Dictionary*. Kegan Paul, 1914, pp. 255–7.

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the mythology of All-India Hinduism, and also its myths and legends are Sanskritized and made the property of Hindus all over India. Thus the Kāvēri Purāṇa becomes a part of the mythology of All-India Hinduism.

The epics, Rāmāyaṇa and Mahābārata, too, play an important part in the spread of Hinduism. The existence of 'Bhīma's pebble' near the source of Kāvēri has been mentioned earlier.[1] The Lakshmaṇatīrtha river which rises in the plateau of Brahmagiri in the extreme south of the province is named after Lakshmaṇa, brother of the hero of the older epic, Rāmāyaṇa. It is said that Rāma and Lakshmaṇa passed through Coorg in the course of their wanderings. Lakshmaṇa, the younger brother, whose obedience to Rāma is proverbial, and who is held up as a model for all younger brothers, disobeyed Rāma as soon as he (Lakshmaṇa) left Coorg and entered Malabar. He realized the enormity of his sin when he returned to Coorg and tried to atone for it by jumping into a fire which he made by shooting an arrow against the foot of the Irpu rocks. Rāma at once created a river to save his brother. This river he called Lakshmaṇatīrtha and it joins the Kāvēri in Mysore State. Rāma established a *linga* (symbol of Shiva or Īshwara) at the spot where Lakshmaṇa tried to commit suicide. The temple built there is called the Rāmēshwara temple (Īshwara established by Rāma), and it is probable that this temple is an imitation of the famous temple of Rāmēshwara, in the extreme south-eastern corner of India. Coorgs and others go on pilgrimage to the temple at Irpu during Shivārātri, an All-India festival in honour of Shiva.

Mountains, rivers, lakes, and trees become associated with characters and incidents in the epics and *purāṇas*. Such local myths are found in every part of India: Rāma built a temple here, Sīta bathed in this river near that rock, Shiva and Pārvati live in Kailāsa in the Himālayas, Agastya the sage meditated on top of that mountain, and so on. One's country becomes the home of one's gods. Patriotism acquires a religious quality.

Certain restrictions observed by Coorgs in common with other Hindus serve to mark them off from members of other religions. Occasionally these restrictions refer to certain incidents and characters in popular Hindu mythology. For instance, Coorg children are told to wash their feet and hands thoroughly before coming into the house from the street. The story of King Naḷa is told them as a warning: Naḷa one day left an unwashed spot on his

[1] [Cf. CAT. 116, p. 216 -- ANALYST]

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ankle and this enabled Saturn to possess him. Subsequently Naḷa lost his throne, was separated from his beloved wife, became deformed owing to serpent-bite, and finally ended up as cook to a king.

It is said in Coorg that Saturn jumped on Naḷa while the latter was standing under a *tāṇḍi* tree. Coorgs usually utter Naḷa's name when they have to pass under a *tāṇḍi* tree, and this is said to have the effect of warding off Saturn.

The above restrictions make the story of Naḷa, which is known to all Hindus, more immediate to Coorgs. The observance of common restrictions frequently marks off one community from another. Such observance can become a symbol of the community's solidarity and identity.

Coorgs, like other Hindus, regard the cow as sacred, and are opposed to killing it. They also abstain from eating beef. The cow has recently figured prominently in Hindu-Muslim relations and has come to be a symbol for Hindu solidarity and identity. Orthodox Hindu opinion regards the killing of cattle with abhorrence, even though the refusal to kill the vast number of useless cattle which exist in India today is detrimental to the economy of the nation.

Reverence for the cow unites Coorgs with other Hindus. It marks both off from other communities living in India.

Certain Sanskritic theological ideas have profoundly affected the lives of Coorgs. Ideas about *karma* and *dharma* are widespread among Coorgs, not only amongst the educated but also amongst the uneducated peasantry. The Coorg funeral song abounds in Sanskritic theological ideas: a man dies 'when the ration of rice kept for him by God Nārāyaṇa is finished'. After death, a bad man goes to hell (*naraka*) and a good man to heaven (*swarga*). A man is continually reborn till he attains salvation (*mōkshu*). The surviving relatives pray that the dead man may not be reborn either as man or beast, because being implies suffering. They pray that he may go to heaven and not return to earth any more.

V

Sanskritic Hinduism has a plasticity which enables it to absorb local religious phenomena. Sanskritic deities frequently undergo changes in the process of being localized. An example will make

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176 177 In Coorg, Shasta is referred to as Ayyappa, or Sārtāvu, and he inhabits the jungles in which he wanders at night with his favourite pack of dogs. At night, in the jungle, he can be heard whistling to his pack. Votive offerings of representations of dogs and bows and arrows are made to his shrines. Some jungles are reserved for Ayyappa exclusively, and nobody may hunt or cut down trees there. Coorgs do not hunt on Wednesdays and Saturdays because Ayyappa hunts on those days. Formerly, liquor and fowl were offered to him by Coorgs after a successful hunt. At some Ayyappa shrines non-vegetarian offerings are made, whereas at others only vegetarian offerings are made. Brahmins are usually priests at the latter shrines.

[224] [551] Coorgs are fond of hunting, and every ancestral house has a pack of dogs which accompany their master during hunting. Ayyappa is extremely popular with Coorgs as the deity presiding over hunting, and very many Coorgs are named after him. His Sanskritic ancestry is not, however, recalled frequently.

Another Sanskritic deity who has undergone modification in the process of becoming acceptable to his devotees is Subramaṇya, who is, in Sanskritic mythology, Skanda, the warrior-son of Shiva. But, as we have earlier mentioned, in Coorg and in the Tuḷu, Kannaḍa, and Telugu countries, Subramaṇya is identified with the cobra which is regarded by orthodox Hindus as a deity. Ant-hills inhabited by cobras are worshipped at Subramaṇya's festival.

177 779 793 The absorption of local cults, rites, and beliefs colours everywhere Sanskritic Hinduism, which varies, in certain particulars, from one local area to another. The initial synthesis usually makes easier the later complete absorption of the local phenomenon in Sanskritic Hinduism.

In this connexion it is instructive to consider the attitude of the Brahmin, the representative of Sanskritic Hinduism, to the village-deities. His attitude is not something fixed and unalterable. It varies from region to region, village to village, and, frequently enough, from deity to deity in the same village, but when we consider a number of instances his varying attitudes fall into a pattern.

It was remarked earlier that the Brahmin priest of the Kaḍupālappa (Krishṇa as churning buttermilk) temple does not have any duties at the Kētrappa temple. But such complete non-co-operation

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with a village-deity (we are not thinking of deities of the Poleyas here) is comparatively rare.

At the Kundat Bhadrakāḷi shrine a Brahmin normally acts as priest, and offerings of fruit and flowers are the rule except on one day in the year when animals are sacrificed outside the Bhadrakāḷi shrine, when the Brahmin priest has left, locking the door of the shrine after him. The Brahmin re-enters the temple next morning only after the front of the shrine has been thoroughly cleaned. He subsequently performs two purificatory rites in order to restore the temple to its normal ritual status.

The Brahmin priest is more co-operative at the festival of the Bhagavati temple at Armēri. In addition to performing certain ritual at the festival, he acts as oracle, a role usually reserved in Coorg for a member of a non-Brahmin caste.

The Rāmēshwara temple at Irpu and the Tala Kāvēri shrine are instances of almost complete Sanskritization. They are among the strongholds of Sanskritic Hinduism in Coorg and act as centres for its spread.

It is not always the Brahmin priest who is the agent of Sanskritic Hinduism. In every part of the Kannaḍa country, and in Coorg, the Lingāyaṭ sect, consisting exclusively of non-Brahmins, have exercised in the past a Sanskritizing influence. Lingāyaṭ ritual is Sanskritic (though not Vēdic), and the Lingāyaṭ Rājas of Coorg have been responsible for the Sanskritization of the customs, manners, and rites of Coorgs. Customs like marking the forehead every morning with three stripes of sacred ashes (*vibhūti*), celebrating the festival of Shivarātri, and erecting tombstones, surmounted by the figure of the Nandi Bull, over the graves of important persons reveal Lingāyaṭ influence. Lingāyaṭism had its origin in the Kannaḍa country, and it was—and is—a predominantly Kannaḍa sect, and the Lingāyaṭs transmitted to Coorgs some purely Kannaḍa customs like Ugādi (lunar New Year).

As mentioned earlier, Lingāyaṭism made headway amongst Coorgs more easily because it was the religion of the rulers. Coorgs holding important posts in the service of the Rājas took over some of the customs and rites of their masters, and this had a chain reaction, which is natural in a highly stratified society.

The Brahmin too has been influenced by non-Sanskritic modes of worship, and impressed with the power of the village-deities. In south India it is common to find Brahmins making votive

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offerings of flowers and fruit and, very rarely, through a non-Brahmin friend, of an animal to the village-deities like Māri during an epidemic of smallpox or plague or cholera. It is wrong to assume, as some do, that in the contact between Brahmins and non-Brahmins, Brahmins have always influenced non-Brahmins, while they themselves have remained uninfluenced.

VI

The presence, within Sanskritic Hinduism, of a vast and ever-growing mythology, the worship of trees, rivers, and mountains, and the association of deities and epic heroes with local spots everywhere in India, makes easy the absorption of non-Sanskritic cults and deities. The caste hierarchy plays no small part in the spread of Sanskritization: not only do outlying communities signalize their entry into the Hindu fold by becoming a caste, but the existence of a sharply structured hierarchy which also permits groups to move up the social ladder acts as a powerful inducement for the lower castes to borrow the customs and habits of the top-most castes. The adoption of vegetarianism, teetotalism, and Sanskritization enables a low caste to rise in status in course of time.

The pantheistic bias in Hinduism also contributes to the Sanskritization of the deities and beliefs of low castes and outlying communities. The doctrine that everything in the universe is animated by God, and that all the various deities are only forms assumed by the same Brahma, makes the process of absorption easier. The village-deity who wants the sacrifice of animals and toddy is also one of the myriad manifestations of the formless Brahma whom the philosopher contemplates. The gods of the lower castes are not denied, but affirmed, and affirmed in such a way that their subsequent Sanskritization is rendered easier.

Another point that needs to be remembered is that the presence of Sanskritized local cults and village-deities in Hinduism makes easier the further absorption of local phenomena. Sanskritic Hinduism may be thought of as consisting of several layers, and the similarity of the lower layers to local cults and village-deities everywhere enables the latter to be absorbed. Once inside Sanskritic Hinduism the local rites and beliefs undergo Sanskritization rapidly and in a thoroughgoing manner.

The spread of Sanskritization being a matter of spontaneous

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The spread of Sanskritization being a matter of spontaneous growth produces certain inconsistencies. For instance, the main body of Coorgs propitiate their dead ancestors by offering meat and liquor with the Baṇṇa acting as oracle, as well as by offering balls of rice-flour under the guidance of a Brahmin priest. Amma Coorgs, a Sanskritized division of Coorgs, make the inconsistency in the customs of the main body of Coorgs all the more glaring by observing annual *shrāddhas* (propitiation of ancestors with balls of rice using Sanskrit *mantras*) after the manner of Brahmins, and by completely eschewing the other mode of propitiation.

Many village-deities who are made out to be forms of Mahādēva (or Shiva), and goddesses who are made out to be Povvedi (i.e. Bhagavati, wife of Shiva), are offered meat and toddy. Side by side with these deities, Coorgs offer worship at the temples of Tala Kāvēri, Rāmēshwara in Irpu, and Omkārēshwara in Mercara, where the priests are Brahmins and Sanskrit *mantras* are used, and where only offerings of fruit and flowers are permitted.

Inconsistencies are also seen on the plane of belief. It has been mentioned earlier that the Coorg funeral song says that the man died because the ration of rice kept for him by God Nārāyaṇa was finished; and the survivors pray God not to cause the dead man to be reborn as living is synonymous with suffering. These ideas are entirely consistent with Sanskritic theology. But at another place in the funeral song the mourner says, 'Nārāyaṇa's thieving horde (*kaḷḷa paḍé*) came to kill you. Had I known it, I would have hacked the horde to pieces.' This is entirely consistent with the martial idiom of Coorgs, but inconsistent with the ideas of Sanskritic theology mentioned earlier.

As a rule, educated Coorgs turn more and more to Sanskritic deities, rites, and beliefs. The Rāmakrishṇa Mission is active in Coorg, and in recent years it has been responsible for carrying the message of philosophical Hinduism to Coorgs. In the last thirty years four Coorgs have become *sanyasis*, dedicating their lives to prayer and meditation and the active service of their fellow men. One of these *sanyasis* has a hermitage (*āshrama*) called appropriately *Kāvēri Āshrama*.

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795 They seem
174 to have been of a rude character like the priests of ancient
793 Britain and Germany, untractable and disinclined to adopt
[177] foreign culture. But the subtilty of the Brahmins gradually instilled into their minds some priestly notions which made them aspire after superior sanctity by adopting the sacred cord and a brahminical diet. It is said, that Timmappeyah, a Havige-Brahmin, and brother-in-law of the late Rajah, who died in 1868, as Karnika or Treasurer, gained such an influence over the Amma-Codagas, that many of them resolved upon laying aside the Coorg costume and imitating the Brahmins in dress and diet. There are even men amongst the Coorgs who under brahminical influence strive after some sort of sanctity by abstaining from the use of liquors and meat diet and by advancing brahminical interests. Brahminism in Coorg, which found no favour with the Rajahs, appears to be in the ascendency under the liberal patronage of the British Government. If it were not for the rich stipends, drawn from Government by the brahminical institutions in Mercara and Táwunád, their present existence would be more than doubtful. Left to the support of the Coorgs alone, they would long ago have succumbed to starvation, for the essential Coorg customs and religious practices can have little in common with Brahminism. There are old Coorgs who never once went to the Talo-Kávéri játre or had Brahmins perform any ceremony for them in their houses. All their lifetime they could do very well without them. Now the Brahmins find their stanchest supporters chiefly in Kiggatnád taluq and generally amongst the middle-aged Coorgs, and amongst such families whose reception by and assimilation with the Coorg-clan dates back to but recent generations. With them Brahmins are in requisition on many occasions. At the birth
[844] of a Coorg child, they ceremoniously purify the defiled house
[783] by sprinkling holy water within and without, for which they receive a gift in rice. At the Coorg wedding the Pújári of

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the village or nád offers Prasáda and whilst throwing a flower-garland over the bridegroom's neck, he mutters a blessing, for which pious act he afterwards receives a gift in money. In case of illness Brahmins are sent for, to implore the deity for recovery. In a place set apart in the compound they perform their ceremonies and, if the patient gets well, they are amply rewarded. At a housewarming (griha-pravésha) it has become the fashion among the Coorgs to invite Brahmins and to give them a good meal and presents. The expenses incurred amount from a small sum to upwards of a thousand Rupees. The Puróhita or officiating Brahmin kindles a fire of jackwood (hebalasu) in the middle room, throws ghee and rice into the flame and repeats some mantras as required for the occasion. Thus we see, that Brahminism invades every accessible opening in Coorg life, and pandering to the ignorance and pride of the Coorgs, it is more successful than the great truths of Christianity. It is, however, to be hoped, that education along with other civilizing influences will do its work, to dissipate the darkness of ignorance and superstition and help to free the Coorgs from the trammels of priestly imposition.

To acknowledge the indigenous Coorg priesthood and yet account for its degraded state as compared with the erudition of the twice-born, the Brahmins invented the following legend, which is not in harmony with the Kávéri-Purána:—The sage Kávéra as a reward for his austerities was blessed with a daughter Kávéri, whom he promised in marriage to Agastia another sage, who also resided on the Brahmagiris. Kávéri did not accept the proposal and assuming the shape of a river fled from the mountain. Agastia in hot persuit overtook her in Katiednád and persuaded her to submit their dispute to the arbitration of their friends. They called three families of Amma-Kodagas and six of Coorgs; the former took the part of Agastia, the latter that of Kávéri. The Amma-Codagas

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decided, that Kávéri should not be allowed to proceed; but the Coorgs declared, that a woman should not be forced to marry against her will. The enraged Agastia Muni pronounced a curse upon the Coorgs, that the generation of Coorgs should decrease, that their women should not tie their garments in front, that the sown rice should not grow and that their cows should not give milk. Kávéri Amma who was the patroness of the Coorgs counteracted the curse as well as she could in the following words: "the Coorg shall increase, but the Amma-Codagas decrease; the Coorg women shall tie their garments behind; the sown paddy shall be transplanted and the cows be milked after the calves have drunk." So saying she tried to escape, and on being held by Agastia by the border of her garment, she turned to the right and flowed rapidly away. Hence the place, where this occurred, was called Balamúri (turning to the right). A linga has been erected near the spot by the Brahmins and it is yearly visited in Tulámása at the time of the Kávéri feast by Coorgs and others, who bathe in the river. Dodda-Virájender built here also a rest-house, which, though over 60 years old, is still in tolerable preservation.

The only object this legend can have is, not to clear up the origin of the indigenous priesthood of Coorg, but to obscure and bury it under the rubbish of Puranic lore which eludes every historical investigation.

7. ARCHITECTURAL STRUCTURES AND ARCHÆOLOGICAL REMAINS IN COORG.

a. Palaces.

Besides the *Mercara-Palace*, there are two other Aramanes, one at *Nálknád* and the other in *Halerinád*, but neither is remarkable for extent or elegance. The palace at Nálknád